



SENIOR EXECUTIVES ASSOCIATION

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STATEMENT OF SENIOR EXECUTIVES ASSOCIATION

For the
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL SERVICES, POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
U.S. SENATE

On S. 2140
FEDERAL EMPLOYEES LEAVE BANK ACT OF 1988

March 18, 1988

The Senior Executives Association represents the interests of the career federal executives who direct the operations of the federal government. We very much appreciate this opportunity to present our views in support of S. 2140, the Federal Employees Leave Bank Act of 1988. We commend Senator Pryor and the Subcommittee staff for developing this balanced leave transfer bill. We believe S. 2140 will minimize the potential for abuse of the program while providing federal employees with the opportunity to give meaningful gifts of annual leave to their co-workers.

As SEA testified last year before the House Subcommittee on Compensation and Employee Benefits, federal employees are often eager to help one another in times of hardship and family crisis. It saddens and frustrates them to watch helplessly while friends and co-workers grapple with devastating or debilitating medical and family problems. Yet frequently they lack effective means for providing assistance. When given an opportunity to help others, they do -- overwhelmingly. For example, each year federal employees designate over \$135 million from their paychecks to charitable causes through the Combined Federal Campaign.

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SEA supports a leave transfer program which is restricted to annual leave. Including sick leave would significantly increase the cost of the program, and we believe that sick leave should be saved by employees to cover their own unforeseen needs. We also believe that the program must have adequate safeguards against abuse and the potential for coercion and collusion. We support a program which does not allow federal employees to be overly-generous with leave gifts rather than utilize sufficient amounts personally to take time off from their work responsibilities.

By restricting the program to annual leave, granting employees who are intimidated or coerced recourse to the MSPB, and limiting the amount of leave which may be transferred to one half the amount accruable by the donor in any year, S. 2140 admirably meets all of the concerns raised by SEA last year.

We have deliberated during the past year about the comparative advantages of a one-to-one leave-sharing program, in which federal employees give gifts to designated co-workers, and a leave bank, in which federal employees donate to a general leave pool from which any qualified federal employee can receive leave. We concluded that a joint program would be best. That is, we would recommend a leave bank program which creates a general pool but does not prohibit federal employees from making gifts to designated co-workers if they wish.

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S. 2140 establishes such a program by incorporating the one-to-one transfer concept into the leave bank. Many employees simply would not support, or contribute to, a leave bank without the ability to give gifts to specified co-workers when medical emergencies arise.

In addition, we commend S. 2140 for enhancing the ability of any qualified federal employee in an emergency medical or family crisis to receive leave assistance. Low-visibility employees, those who may not share personal details of their lives with their co-workers and those who may not form close friendships in the workplace, will be able to apply to the leave bank when their situations warrant assistance. If one-to-one transfer were the only avenue available, these employees might, unfairly, not receive help. We therefore also endorse the S. 2140 provisions which require any leave bank applicant to have donated a few hours to the bank to qualify for assistance. This incentive to contribute ensures that there will be adequate donated leave for non-designated employees who need it.

SEA supports extensive union involvement, perhaps in the form of a union and management committee, to administer each agency's leave transfer program. Each agency's Leave Bank Board established under S. 2140 should include at least one union representative as one of the three members.

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Union involvement on each Board would facilitate the addition of one further provision to S. 2140 -- and the only recommendation which we believe will improve the bill. We recommend that the law mandate that decisions of the Leave Bank Board are final and may not be grieved or otherwise challenged. Eliminating the possibility that disappointed leave bank applicants can in any way challenge the decision of the Board will ensure that a good program does not become embroiled in adversarial arguments between disgruntled employees and those on the Board.

In order to ensure fairness, Board members should be changed annually so a fresh perspective is constantly provided. With such rotation, the necessity for grievances is largely eliminated. We would hate to see a program begun out of generosity by individuals reduced to but one more entitlement program to be fought over. Final decisions will make the majority happy and will impress upon the Board members the importance of their actions.

Thank you for considering our views on S. 2140.